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the family character far more powerfully than the stern and strong-minded father. From her and the nurse who helped her they heard endless songs and anecdotes; the ballads of the haunted neighbourhood where they lived, and the wild traditions of the past. A haunted neighbourhood it was, for ghosts and goblins were nearly as common as geese. There were "brownies" to help the maids to clean up the parlour and keep alive the kitchen fire, and weird women and warlocks to promise power and fortune to their favourites; but there were also "kelpies," that lured the benighted traveller to the swollen ford, and drowned him in the flood, and witches, casting an evil eye on an enemy, till he pined, and sickened, and refused his food, and died without any apparent disease. Then there were ill-conditioned elves, that turned the milk sour, and got the dairymaid scolded or sent away; and hideously ill-natured imps, who mislaid everything, so that the housewife never could find her keys when she wanted them; who put everything in its wrong place—the farmer's hat in the stable, the mistress's stocking on the roof of the byre, and on one occasion ventured so far as to steal the minister's sermon and supply its place with a pack of cards, so that when the worthy man mounted his pulpit to give out the text, he turned over the knave of clubs.

All these stories were repeated, and in the ductile heart of childhood implicitly received. So Robert grew up, surrounded by the super-earthly and uncanny. He saw lights in the darkest nights in the ruined windows of Alloway Kirk, hereafter to be immortalized and seen by many thousand eyes in the poem of "Tam o' Shanter." He heard voices in churchyards, which he afterwards recorded in a "Dialogue between Death and Dr. Hornbook." Nor, when he approached manhood, were other influences wanting. There were witches who worked with him in harvest time in cutting down the corn; but it was remarked that the witches on these occasions were generally very good-looking, and to ordinary eyes appeared country lasses about seventeen or eighteen years old. But witches or not, the days of gramarie were soon to end. After helping his father in the work of the small farm he held still "on the banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," and feeding his mind with a miscellaneous feast of all the books he could collect or borrow, he was sent to the neighbouring town of Irvine, to learn the trade of a flax-dresser, or, as he calls it, a "heckler." This was in 1781, and Robert was twenty-two years old. You would think perhaps that the son of parents so poor, condemned to such rustic and unintellectual employment, would write a poorish sort of



letter, with some faults perhaps in spelling, or a slip or two in grammar. Now here is, luckily preserved, the note he sent his father shortly after going to his new employment. Are such letters often sent from Oxford or Cambridge? Observe the style :—

HONOURED SIR,—I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New Year's Day ; but work comes so hard upon us that I do not choose to be absent on that account. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees ; the weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past events nor look forward into futurity, for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when, for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity ; but my principal, and, indeed, my only pleasurable employment, is looking backward and forward in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that, ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life. As for the world, I despair of ever making a figure in it ; I am not formed for the bustle of the busy nor the flutter of the gay. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were but too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which, I hope, have been remembered ere it is yet too late.

B

This letter owes its desponding tone to the fits of mental depression to which the poetic temperament is peculiarly subject. It took its rise from no romantic disappointment with the lowliness of his position, or want of confidence in himself. Burns, without being a vain man, knew from the first that he was gifted with great and varied faculties. Already he had essayed them in rhymes, and, buoyed up by anticipations of fame and fortune, he offered an unappalled front to evils far more serious than his narrow wages and small lodging at Irvine, for we find him bating nor heart nor hope when his father, after being ruined in the farm of Lochlea, had died and left his family desolate, and a fire had burned to the ground the shop in which he was learning his trade. "I was left," he says, "like a true poet, not worth a sixpence." But, like a true poet, or true anything else, he gathered himself up for the battle of life, collected all that remained of the family property, and, in partnership with his brother Gilbert, and with the domestic management of his mother and sisters, he took the farm of Mossgiel, near Mauchline, and felt more at home with the plaid on his shoulders and his hand on the plough than when boxed up in a workshop, and intent on carding the flax. It was while "vexing this niggard soil for scanty bread" that he first

became distinguished for his poetical powers. But to a wretched use we must confess he turned them at first. It was as the fiercest satirist of one of the parties which then divided the religious world of Ayrshire that he let loose his irreverent muse. Whether the worthy persons he attacked were right or wrong in the course they pursued (there is no doubt, at all events, that neither side kept within the bounds of what would now be thought legitimate controversy), nobody can find any excuse, even in their wit and cleverness, for the frightful personal lampoons with which the new tenant of Mossiel assaulted the rival camp. Their fame, however, though local, was great, and doubtless the practice thus gained encouraged him to nobler efforts; and high time it was—for he had now a wife and son to support, and the farm was scarcely sufficient for the addition. The Bonnie Jean of so many of his songs was the mother of his child, under the sanction of marriage lines (as a written promise is called), which constitute as true a matrimony in the civil courts of Scotland as any performed in the Church; but alas! Jean's father was a leading man among the ecclesiastical sect which his son-in-law had opposed, and, giving way to his anger, determined on the gratification of his revenge, even at the expense of his daughter's

reputation. He burned the "lines" proving and establishing the marriage, and tore his daughter from a wicked and unbelieving heathen who had turned into ridicule the leaders of the party he belonged to. Here was a real suffering. Burns forgot his wretched fields—his prospects of distress. The worst of evils had come upon him, and all day long he looked despairing to the sinking sun which he knew was setting upon the cottage where Jean was kept away from him. How little many of us think, when we read or listen to his song on this occasion, how bitter was the grief it sprang from, and how true the affection it expressed:—

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best:
There wild-woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green,
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.

O blaw ye westlin winds, blaw saft
Amang the leafy trees,
Wi' balmy gale, frae hill and dale
Bring hame the laden bees ;
And bring the lassie back to me
That's aye sae neat and clean ;
Ae smile o' her wad banish care,
Sae charming is my Jean.

What sighs and vows amang the knowes
Hae passed atween us twa !
How fond to meet, how wae to part,
That night she gaed awa !
The powers aboon can only ken,
To whom the heart is seen,
That nane can be sae dear to me
As my sweet lovely Jean !

Whether his now disconsolate situation inspired him with poetic thoughts we cannot tell, but in two years he finished the poems which first spread his reputation beyond his native glens, and which from that hour to this have formed the solace, the pride, and the delight of every cottage in Scotland. Allan Cunningham tells us, in his delightful life of his brother bard, that the volume penetrated into quarters where such light literature had never ventured before. An old Cameronian divine gave a copy of it to Allan's father, and said, "Keep it out o' the way o' your children, lest ye find them, as I found mine, reading it on the Sabbath." The

Sabbath could certainly have been better employed than in reading those pages, but certainly, also, it could have been worse. The Puritanic feeling which at a darker period of Scottish history had been the mainspring and support of civil liberty, had by this time degenerated into a rigid asceticism, which cavilled at small departures from external decorum, but left the greater enormities of life and manners untouched. With a far greater appearance of sanctimoniousness than is practised at the present day was combined a larger amount of coarseness and immorality. The Covenanter, in his blue bonnet, with pistol in his belt and broadsword by his side, worshipping God in the wild fastnesses where the persecutor hardly ventured to follow, listening with grim satisfaction to the denunciations of some shrieking divine inculcating vengeance on the guilty disturbers of his devotions, this is a very different man from the Covenanting baker or grocer in a country town, still drawling through the nose, still raging with hatred against all who differed from him in doctrine, but mixing his flour with bones and alum, and sanding his sugar, as if he were a mere Erastian;—and therefore it is perhaps judging from a point of view not intended by the poet, when we deprecate as altogether wicked and indefensible the

attacks contained in his early poems on the "Unco Gude, or Rigidly Righteous." There is nothing so contemptible as the assumption of a virtue where it does not exist; but the worst form of this hypocrisy is the persistence in the outward manifestation of a principle after the principle has disappeared. Even the Quaker's hat is now falling into contempt, because it represents no longer what it was introduced to represent. The simplicity of apparel which was assumed by the Friends was intended to keep them from being noticed on account of their clothes; they therefore dressed in the common fashion of their time, without the recent importation of hats from Spain, or doublets from France; but the effect of their continued breadth of brim and wideness of tail is the very reverse of their first unostentatious adoption. The Puritans of the West, in the same way, had outlived the period of their rigid forms. They were the Don Quixotes of religion, and transplanted the feelings and manners of the days of Lauderdale and Claverhouse into the times of Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox. Burns accordingly laughed at them as anachronisms, as he would have laughed at the Spanish hidalgo in his suit of armour on Rosinante. But he had other sentiments excited besides those of laughter. His attack on individual preachers

we have already disapproved ; but can we wonder that a man smarting under the greatest calamity which can befall an affectionate heart—the cruel and needless separation from the object of its affection—allowed the circle of his indignation to extend from the cold-blooded elder who tore his daughter from his arms on a point of doctrine, till it embraced the whole principle from which such ferocious dogmatism sprang ? It is not unjust to call this rigidly righteous father a hypocrite—rather it is a compliment even to his views of religion to deny that such an action could be justified by its precepts, or that it called for the abnegation of all enjoyment, or the repression of the natural impulses of childhood, so that youth itself was but a long deceit, a painful imitation of the gravity of age, or that it condemned the devout admiration of the beauties of a landscape. Don't these people see that, by going round in a circle, they have become close followers of the very persons of whom they have the greatest horror—the voluntary sufferers of the Romish Church ; the shivering anchorite in his cave, the drivelling maniac on his pillar ? And what was the result on the manners of the peasantry or of the gentry at the time ? Alas ! Burns himself, who reveals the cause, serves also as an example of the effect. In the midst of all this false and hollow Puritanism raged a coarse-

ness and sensuality among the general body of the people which it is difficult to describe. Scotland at that period was a poor and thinly-peopled country. The disputed succession in 1745 had hindered the progress of wealth, and the foolish pride of the most barren and feudal of all the nations of Europe had prevented the gentry even of the second degree from entering into trade. In idle gentility, the younger brothers of the Laird were more dependent on him than his servants, and, in fact, performed the offices of his domestics, while they would have scorned to earn their bread by honest industry. This combination of pride and servility is what we see in the Scottish characters presented to us by the novelists and dramatic writers of the last century. But suddenly the prospects of the younger gentry brightened. India was thrown open to their exertions—India, where whole countries were to be conquered, and native kings subdued and pillaged. Commerce itself, in that golden land, was a monopoly requiring jobbery and interest to get a right to exercise it, and therefore was fitted for gentle blood. Away went half the junior aristocracy of Scotland: they were soldiers, writers, merchants; they were all three together, and fought and diplomatized, and bought and sold, and were grasping and cruel, and trampled on the native popu-

lations, and exacted great ransoms from prisoners they had no right to take, and came back to their own country in the hateful character of Nabob—tyrannical, blustering, and ostentatious, but distributing, by acquisitions of land, the riches they had so iniquitously acquired. This periodic return of Indian fortunes was beginning in the days of Burns; but the improvement had not yet reached the peasantry. There were no good roads, the first elements of civilization and wealth, except the great passages between town and town. Glasgow, in 1784, was a place of some forty thousand inhabitants, principally supported by a trade in slaves and sugar. Edinburgh was the capital of intellect and fashion, but very poor and very proud—a personification of the national character. There were small commercial dealings at Dundee and Aberdeen, and other places on the eastern coast, principally with Holland and the Baltic. The arts and sciences had not yet been applied to manufactures; women spun the flax at home; weavers wove it into webs in their own houses; hecklers, we have seen, carded the wool in company, but this was because the process required practice and skill, and combination expedited the work. Farms, whether large in size or not, were very low in rent: the finest lands in Roxburgh and Berwickshire let at sixteen shillings the Scotch

acre—there were no poor rates, and only nominal tithes—and were held by persons who availed themselves of their long leases to make large fortunes from the rise in prices consequent on the French war, and in many instances to buy out their landlords, who had no share in this increase of value. But the farmer of ordinary land was generally not much superior to the labourers he employed, either in capital or rank. They all ate together in the great kitchen, with the huge open chimney, and the wooden settle to keep off the draught of the door. Early in the morning they feasted on oatmeal porridge, or brose, accompanied either with jugs of sour milk, or a large lump of salt butter to give the mess a flavour. At dinner the same, with perhaps potatoes and greens, mashed up in the pot they were boiled in, flavoured with fat or butter, and supped in alternate mouthfuls out of wooden spoons. At supper, when the labours of the farm were over, vast were the basins, or rather tubs of “sowans” which smoked upon the board, —a thin, innutritious, but very palatable food, of which ploughman, herd, carter, and shepherd would ingurgitate such quantities as it is impossible to compute; and loaded with this, and after snoring through the prayer and chapter with which they were dismissed, they would retire to rest, leaving the more immediate family

to a social hour, seated on cozy benches on each side of the fire. Here, while the wife pursued her labours at the reel, and the daughters knitted stockings, the sons, if literary, would read portions of Allan Ramsay's poems, or Boston's "Fourfold State." And so to bed. A life of apparent innocence, and worthy of all commendation. Many there were, let us hope, who fulfilled this description, and among others the excellent father of Burns himself. But there is a drawback to the picture. The refinements of life were utterly unknown. Manners were corrupted and perverted to an incredible degree; the relations of the sexes on the most degrading and unsatisfactory footing; the language gross and debasing; and there can be no doubt, as I have heard old people say, that Burns' poems, even the worst of them, exercised a refining and purifying influence on the habits and feelings of the peasantry, and that the wonder of his works is not their inelegance, nor their profanity, nor their immodesty, but their exemption from all these faults, considering the associations of his early days, and the universal character of the time. It certainly was a great gain to exchange the coarseness and ribaldry of their ordinary talk, and the foul incidents of their favourite volumes, such as the "Adventures and Witty Sayings of George

Buchanan," for such true and yet idealized representations of rustic life as were set before them by one of their own sphere.

Even where he trenched closest on the reverence due to sacred things, the dullest were able to see that the design was not to ridicule or degrade the holy, but to rescue it from the accompaniments that weakened its influence. The poem called the "Holy Fair" is the finest specimen both of the poet's power of satire, and of the danger incurred by any one, however pure his intentions, when he ventures on subjects not fitted for the Comic Muse. It is like the Reformation carried on by Knox, where, in pulling down the ornaments of superstition, the walls of the main building were damaged; in displacing a Romish saint the altar itself was injured. But how are we to estimate a work but by its effects? How are we who live in these improved times to judge of the blows necessary to be administered either by Knox or Burns? How do we know whether it was possible with silken hands to outroot the old idolatry, or with honeyed lines to reprehend the howling denunciations of the pulpit and the gross excesses of the congregation? When this tremendous picture of themselves was presented to the persons principally concerned in these desecrations, in the midst of their smart and

suffering, there were not wanting voices to confess that the punishment was deserved. It was acknowledged that opportunity was taken of the great gathering for the celebration of the most solemn ceremony of the Church, first, by the preachers, for theatrical display, and then by the audience for love-making, drinking, scandal, and all other bad conduct, so that the religious observances were made subservient to the worst purposes. Who could be too severe on this? Who could view contentedly so great an evil? Good taste, if not religious feeling, was injured by these proceedings; and what has been the effect, not perhaps of these poetic castigations alone, but certainly in some degree of the vividness of their description and the notoriety they obtained? There is not a more beautiful sight in the world than the open-air sacrament of the Scotch kirk. From far and near the people assemble; the pulpit is removed into the churchyard, the congregation either stand in reverent attention, or sit orderly on the grass. The ministers of the neighbouring parishes officiate in turns. When the weather is fine, and the crowded people lift their hats at the prayer, or raise the psalm, how moving to the heart is the sight and sound! There is no need now for poetic objurgation. There is no tasteless striving after eloquence in the preacher, no riotous retire-

ment to public-houses among the congregation. All is solemn—all is calm. The bitterness of the “Holy Fair” has lost its pungency, and the verses can now only be looked upon as descriptive of a state of manners long happily passed away. It may even be read in this view by persons who would be repelled from it by its apparent irreverence, if they were ignorant of the state of society at the time. We can look on it now with as impartial feelings as on one of the satires of Juvenal, and the same indeed may be said of several of Burns’ works, which, when first produced, had the appearance of reckless insolence, but were in reality the outpourings of a virtuous indignation. For some time he was looked on in his own neighbourhood merely as a scorner of dignities, and he might have gone on, admired by the intelligent few, the terror and opprobrium of a narrow-minded sectarianism. But through the line of demarcation between Edinburgh and the provinces, the small book published at Kilmarneock forced its way. Pedantic scholars began comparing it with Horace and the rest, but soon forgot Horace and all the Romans in the freshness, the variety, the *Scotchness* of the new poet. It had hitherto been the fashion with Scottish authors, except Allan Ramsay and Robert Ferguson, to write in higher, purer, and better English,

as they believed, than the English themselves. Here was a man who handled the half-forgotten and altogether despised tongue of his country in so masterly a manner that humour, wisdom, tenderness, love, and patriotism seemed all to find in it their fittest and noblest expression; and great whispers took place in the drawing-rooms of the capital—"And the man is only a ploughman—the man was never at college, scarcely even at school; the man is a dreadfully strong man, and thrashes his own oats with his own flail; the man is a dreadfully wicked man, and his wife's father has taken her away from him, and they say he drinks."

What a series of discoveries for the petted, pouting, silly, and aristocratic circles in Edinburgh literary society!—especially that Burns drank. Oh! but it was the quality of the drink they shuddered at, not the quantity. If he had reeled home speechless every night of the year, "with claret and good capon lined," they would not have had a word to say; for did not the *élite* of the land do so?—were not noblemen staggering in the streets, and gentlemen brawling in taverns, and judges hiccuping on the bench?—for was it not the wretched time of polite company, both in England and Scotland, when the most brutal excesses were no blot on the most exalted rank? But Burns drank whisky—never, at

that time, beyond the bounds of moderation—whereas the chiefs of literature and fashion drank themselves into insensibility with the finest Bordeaux and the richest sherry. An immense difference this!—and in many things the principle of this distinction is not unknown at the present time. So the great Edinburgh authors, and talkers, and dancers, and flirts were delighted when they heard that the rustic puzzle had come up to the great city to arrange for a new edition of his poems. What amusement they anticipated from his awkward manners, and what superiority they expected to feel over the prodigiously strong man, who ploughed, and harrowed, and flailed, and drank whisky, and perhaps had never tasted claret in his life. But they met with a barbarian, says Allan Cunningham, who was not at all barbarous. “His air was easy and unperplexed; his address was perfectly well-bred and elegant in its simplicity; he felt neither eclipsed by the titled, nor struck dumb before the learned and the eloquent, but took his station with the ease and grace of one born to it. In the society of men alone he spoke out; he spared neither his wit, nor his humour, nor his sarcasm; he seemed to say to all, I am a man and you are no more, and why should I not act and speak like one? It was remarked, however, that he had not learned, or

did not desire, to conceal his emotions ; that he commended with more rapture than was courteous, and contradicted with more bluntness than was thought polite. It was thus with him in the company of men. When women approached, his look altered, his eye beamed milder ; all that was stern in his nature underwent a change, and he received them with deference, but with a consciousness that he could win their attention as he had won that of others who differed from them indeed only in the texture of their kirtles. This natural power of rendering himself acceptable to women had been observed and envied by Sillar, one of the dearest of his early comrades ; and it stood him in good stead now, when he was the object to whom the Duchess of Gordon—the loveliest as well as the wittiest of women—directed her discourse. Burns, she afterwards said, won the attention of the Edinburgh ladies by a deferential way of address—by an ease and natural grace of manners, as new as it was unexpected ; that he told them the stories of some of his tenderest songs or liveliest poems in a style quite magical, enriching his little narratives, which had, one and all, the merit of being short, with personal incidents of humour or of pathos.”

When a duchess had said this of the ploughman, what more was to be said ? And when

the eyes of duchesses and beauties had filled with tears at the simple narrative of some of his early griefs, what more was wanted to his triumph as a man of society as well as a poet? In one of those glittering assemblages, where wealth and refinement spread themselves out before the unaccustomed eyes of the Ayrshire peasant, he began a description to a sympathetic few of the sad incidents of his attachment to Highland Mary. Gradually the circle widened, the music stopped, conversation in nooks and corners came to a close, and all gathered round the simple countryman; first they were interested with his description, then they entered into the hopes of happiness that were opening before him, and finally, fine ladies, and fine gentlemen too, perhaps, were melted into tears when they heard the melancholy ending. Highland Mary was a beautiful girl, to whom he became attached at a very early period. He was poor, and she had only her half-year's fee, for she was in the condition of a servant; but thoughts of gear never darkened their dream; they resolved to wed, and exchanged vows of constancy and love. Young people are romantic, but not the less sincere on that account. They plighted their vows on the Sabbath, to make them more sacred; they made them by a burn where they had courted, that open Nature might be a wit-

ness; they made them over an open Bible, to show the solemnity of their thoughts in this mutual act; and when they had done, they both took water in their hands and scattered it in the air, to intimate that as the stream was pure, so were their intentions. They parted when they did this; but they never met again. She died in a burning fever, during a visit to her relations to prepare for her marriage; and all that he had of her was a lock of her long bright hair and her Bible, which she exchanged for his.

Now let us see what uses he turned this incident to in the education of his poetic power. Long after this, the anniversary of his loss was a day of gloom, and the lines now quoted give the finishing stroke to the delicate narrative of his sweetheart's death. It is addressed to "Mary in Heaven":—

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usherest in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love!

Eternity cannot efface
Those records dear of transports past ;
Thy image at our last embrace ;
Ah ! little thought we 'twas our last !

Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods, thick'ning green ;
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
Twin'd am'rous round the raptur'd scene ;
The flow'rs sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray—
Till too, too soon, the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of winged day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care !
Time but th' impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Mary, dear departed shade !
Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid ?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

We are now getting to perceive that the Muse will admit no vile companions in the heart where she fixes her seat. Poetry, depend upon it, is a purifying power in spite of its occasional waywardness ; and if Burns forgot these noble influences sometimes, we are to look for his excuse to the peculiarities of his position. There he was—the idol for a time of the highest circles in his native land, recognised as an honour to his country, his words sounding in all dwell-

ings, whether hut or palace—his name a common possession among all classes—his speeches repeated, his features painted,—and his pockets as empty, and his prospects as dark as ever! Nay, emptier and darker; for the farm of Mossiel was a failure; the subscriptions to his poems came slowly and inadequately in; and if, in the first glow of his success, he hoped that his honourable, his right honourable, his learned and reverend patrons would do anything more for him, he added one other name to the long list of disappointed men of genius who find the difference between praise and help—who are admired, as Horace said long ago, and neglected. So his mind got embittered by the contemplation of his friends' words and actions. He broke out into epigram and satire, instead of booning and biding his time; he sneered at scholars who had nothing but scholarship to boast of, as at Elphinstone's translation of Martial, a Latin poet—

Oh thou whom Poesy abhors,
Whom Prose has turned out of doors,
Heard'st thou that groan? proceed no further,
'Twas laurell'd Martial roaring murder;

at nobles whose literary taste was limited to the outside of their books;—he found a copy of Shakspeare, magnificently bound, dirty and worm-eaten; this was his revenge:—

Through and through the inspirèd leaves,
 Ye maggots, make your windings ;
 But oh ! respect his lordship's taste,
 And spare his golden bindings.

at meanness, wherever he found it, as in the case of a proud lady, whom he calls, from the name of her estate, Queen Netherplace—

One Queen Artemisia, as old stories tell,
 When deprived of the husband she loved so well,
 In respect of the love and affection he'd show'd her,
 She reduced him to dust, and she drank up the powder ;
 But Queen Netherplace, of a different complexion,
 When called on to order the funeral direction,
 Would have eat her dear lord on a slender pretence,
 Not to shew her respect, but to save the expense !—

at wickedness and want of charity, as in the case of a wretched being whom he calls "Wat":—

Sic a reptile was Wat, sic a miscreant slave,
 That the worms were disgusted when laid in his grave ;
 " In his flesh there's a famine," a starv'd reptile cries,
 " And his heart is rank poison," another replies.

Now, as the world contains a very considerable number of mean men, and unkind men, and pretentious men, it is not to be wondered at that Burns, by declaring such war on meanness, and unkindness, and pretension, made a great many enemies. People were astonished to find that the person they thought they were patronizing had not only an opinion of his own, but a tremendous

trumpet through which to make it known. It chanced one day, during this memorable visit to Edinburgh, that Burns was in the house of Professor Fergusson, where several of the literary dons of the day were assembled, and among them, sitting bashful in a corner, a tall young lad, who laboured under a slight lameness of one of his feet, and attracted the poet's notice by the extraordinary sagacity of his look. There was a print on the wall of a soldier lying dead on the snow, with his faithful dog beside him, together with his wife and child. Burns was affected by the desolation of the scene even to tears. Some lines were written under the print which he did not know, and asked where they came from. Nobody could tell; but the boy timidly whispered to a friend that they were from a neglected poem of Langhorne's, called the "Justice of Peace." Burns rewarded him with a look and a word which he never forgot. This boy of the amazing memory was Walter Scott. The man of twenty-seven could of course have nothing in common with the boy of fifteen, but it is pleasant to know that there was even this slight link of connexion between the bard of the people and the minstrel of the aristocracy. This is the description he gives of Burns' appearance at the climax of his fame:—

His person was strong and robust, his manners rustic, not clownish—a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys an idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of its portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known who he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school; *i.e.*, none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gude-man* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time. His conversation expressed the most perfect self-confidence without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again except in the street, when he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day), the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

Trifling! They were so trifling that the patronage ostentatiously died off into unmeaning pro-

testations and mean excuses ; and the result of his acquaintance with the high life of the capital was, that he retired to his native county almost as poor as before, sickened and disappointed. The emolument from his poems barely sufficed to stock another farm in Ayrshire, of the name of Ellisland, which, however, was made more agreeable to him by the neighbourhood of several gentlemen of cultivated minds and generous dispositions. Riddel, of Friar's Carse, and Miller, of Dalswinton, and Syme, of Ryedale, are still known and honoured for their attachment to the poet ; and ladies of station and talent were honoured by his correspondence. But farming seems a poor speculation unless supported by skill and wealth. Burns may have had skill, but it was merely the mechanic skill of holding the plough or guiding the harrow ; and wealth he had none. Yet he fought a gallant fight with sterile land and deficient harvests. He published songs in the *Museum*, a periodical of the time for the preservation of Scotch music, and joined Mr. Thomson in his great and ultimately successful work, the "Collection of Scottish Airs." But these are but the embroidery, not the cloth ; and Ellisland was a losing concern. At the end of the third year he resigned the lease, and what did he do now to support his wife and family ? He had been made an excise-

man a short time before this, and henceforth had no higher occupation than to look after private stills, and do his duty to the revenue. What the opinion of his brother excisemen may have been of the dignity of their occupation we have no means of judging, but Burns astonished them, at one of their convivial meetings, by stating what the sentiments of the public were on the merits of the fraternity, and burst forth into the following song:—

The deil cam' fiddling through the town,
 And danced awa wi' the Exciseman,
 And ilka wife cries—"Auld Mahoun,
 I wish you luck o' the prize, man!"
 The deil's awa, the deil's awa,
 The deil's awa wi' the Exciseman;
 He's danc'd awa, he's danc'd awa,
 He's danc'd awa wi' the Exciseman!

We'll mak our maut, we'll brew our drink,
 We'll dance, and sing, and rejoice, man;
 And mony braw thanks to the meikle black deil
 That danc'd awa wi' the Exciseman.

There's threesome reels, there's foursome reels,
 There's hornpipes and strathspeys, man;
 But the ae best dance e'er cam to the land
 Was—the deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman.
 The deil's awa, the deil's awa,
 The deil's awa wi' the Exciseman:
 He's danc'd awa, he's danc'd awa,
 He's danc'd awa wi' the Exciseman.

An extempore also on receiving his appointment is very characteristic :—

Searching auld wives' barrels,
Och—hon! the day!
That clarty barm should stain my laurels;
But—what'll ye say?
These movin' things ca'd wives and weans
Wad move the very hearts o' stanes!

It will be seen from this that he was not much pleased with the office, and great accusations have been made against the Government of the day for condemning the greatest poet of his country to one of its most unpleasant employments. Many bitter words have been said on this subject, and there were few who in the days of their youth did not feel indignant at the degradation. But 1789 had not exactly the feelings of 1856, either with regard to Burns or other things. The dreadful upheaving of all constituted authorities and recognised positions was just beginning in France. There was a wide spirit of disaffection at home; and no wonder, for there was such cruelty, such narrowness, and such blindness in the Government, that, on reading the state of public affairs at that time, it seems marvellous that we escaped the horrors of as bloody a revolution as our neighbours. The wisest of our statesmen saw little chance of avoiding a universal disruption of society, a reign

of terror, a state of anarchy, to be followed by a relentless military despotism. All this was clearly prophesied as the unfailing circle of forcible and violent changes of constitution; and every day showed the truth of these forebodings by the frightful scenes which were enacted in the most civilized nation in Europe. Burns had, unfortunately, the reputation of uniting in his own person the two wildest extremes of opposition to the English Government; being by hereditary and poetic feeling a Jacobite, and, earnest in his regrets for the exiled Stuarts, and by his honest indignation at some defects in the administration, an earnest advocate for reform. In neither of those views was he in dangerous earnest, for when the trial came, he showed himself as patriotic and conservative as the best. But the time in 1789 had not come. He had been active and open in what then passed for treasonable hopes, and had drunk some dangerous and inflammatory toasts. These circumstances are sufficient to account for the slender patronage the Ministry of the day thought it right to extend to him; and perhaps they are even to be applauded for taking no official notice of his proceedings. What could they have done for so hostile a politician, whatever they may have wished to do for so admirable a writer? What post was open to

him? Could they have made him Commissioner of Excise, when he had declared himself opposed to their ordinary authority? The country itself would have been alarmed if it had seen power and influence put into the hands of a man who had professed sympathy with the demagogues of France. If there had at that time been a fund for pensioning distinguished authors, it is perfectly clear that Burns would not have accepted a penny; not that it would have been wrong, for no money can be so amply earned as that which a nation pays to men who have instructed or delighted it, but the principle of this reciprocal right and duty was not then understood. The recipient of a pension would have appeared to Burns a purchased slave; it would have appeared the wages of corruption, not the reward of merit; and he would have preferred his honest income from the rummaging of barrels and ferreting of smugglers to the gilded trappings of what he would have considered a dishonourable dependence. But, gauger as he was, the Muse did not disdain his company. It may be doubted, indeed, whether she would have presented herself so often if he had sate in an easy chair, counting over the gains of some golden sinecure. But other sources of inspiration were, unfortunately, as frequent with him as the Muse. To drown care, as it is

called, he assembled round him the more jovial spirits of the district, and paid the dreadful penalty of being the pleasantest of companions, by being continually pressed into company. This is always the greatest danger of a man of entertaining powers and social disposition. His inner brightness is called forth, and his fire wasted by the perpetual blaze; and worse, individually, than this,—the very brilliancy of his words reveals the darkness of his haunts. Many dull, unfanciful, and silent toppers have drunk quantities,—without a syllable passing their sodden lips, and therefore without detection as without enjoyment,—which would have set Burns' tongue in motion, and his heart in flames; and he would have poured forth wit, lampoon, and ballad in endless profusion, so that the memory of his excess was as sure of immortality as the beauty of his language, and, like the lady fantastically described by Moore, he “moved in light of his own making.” Let us always remember this, when we hear of the debauches of Burns. Thousands of the persons who turned up their eyes in horror at his behaviour, behaved far worse, only nobody took any notice whether they behaved worse or better. It was the age of bacchanalian licence. Only here was a man who called attention to the fact of his frequent indulgences by marking each of

them with some imperishable memorial. It is quite right in us to lament the truthfulness of these accusations; but for the whisky-bibbing, dram-drinking, toddy-soaking hypocrites of Dumfries and Edinburgh, in 1793, to shudder at Robert Burns, is simply disgusting. Nobody lectured small defaulters with such prodigious gravity as Sir John Dean Paul; and who was such a judge of refinement, and propriety, and politeness, as Miss Caroline Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs? However, it is an old device of detected pickpockets to cry out, "Stop thief;" and so, reducing Burns's iniquities to their true dimensions, what do we find? That he had £70 a year, and a numerous family to keep; that he had had high expectations, which were deceived; that he had the noblest and most impulsive of dispositions, which for a while carried him into wilder declamations against the rich and powerful than he intended; that under the influence of poverty, despondency, disappointment, and discontent, he occasionally fled for refuge to the comforts of the bottle. But let his detractors answer this—Did he neglect his duty? did he neglect his wife? did he neglect his children? did he deceive his friends? did he contract a debt? did he fawn or feign? did he desert his country? did he scorn religious hopes? No! Then who are we, to vilify this

man? Shouldn't we pity, lament, and regret? But, as to holding up our heads, and curling the corners of our lips, and thinking loftily, and even thanking God that we are immensely respectable Pharisees, let it be far from us!

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord—its varying tone,
Each spring—its varying bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what's *resisted*.

'There were accusations not of this nature only, but of hatred of his country—Burns, who wrote "Scots wha hae;" of a desire to submit to revolutionary France!—Burns, who wrote "Should haughty Gaul invasion threat;" of a wish to get foreign aid to mend our constitution—Burns who wrote—

The kettle o' the kirk and state
Perhaps a clout may fail in't;
But deil a foreign tinker loon
Shall ever ca' a nail in't.
Be Britons still to Britons true
Among ourselves united;
For never but by British hands
Shall Britain's wrongs be righted!

What could such a man say in answer to such accusations? and very dangerous accusations at

that time they were. Men both in England and Scotland were tried and transported for saying they thought a reform in Parliament desirable, and drinking "The People." Armed with a little brief authority, down came letters from Inspectors of the Excise, cautioning him that he was neither to see nor hear, his business being to watch public-houses, but by no means to attend to public affairs. This to Burns, the most independent of men, one of whose earliest aspirations was—

Thy spirit, independence, let me share,
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye!

What reply was possible to all this? It strikes me, the only reply possible was the one he gave—he died. Illness came upon him; friends—some, at least, terrified by the double cloud that darkened over his name, of loose living and Republican principles—hung back; his chiefs diminished his salary, when he could not do the full duties of his post, and resisted applications made in his favour to continue the paltry stipend for the short time he had to live. They declined; but honour to the young man who was appointed to take his place, for he did the work and refused the pittance. His name was Stobie, a cognomen,

I know, not to be found in the peerage,
written henceforth in a higher list of nobility,

where the patent of their creation, as Burns expressed it, is held immediately from heaven. Fears of arrest—I wish we could call them visionary—haunted him on his dying bed, for a person threatened legal proceedings for the cloth of which his volunteer regimentals were made, and few were the friends to whom he could have recourse. Yet some there were—ladies first—

Oh woman! in our hours of ease, uncertain, coy, and hard
to please,

* * * * *

When pain and anguish wring the brow, a ministering
angel thou!

Mrs. Riddel, of Glen Riddel, visited him in his illness. “The stamp of death was on his features,” she says, “but his eye had not lost its light, nor the mind its strength.” Then there was the beautiful and kind Jessy Lewars, the heroine of many of his songs, who came like a sunbeam into the darkened dwelling, and took care of the bairns, and soothed the wife, and attended to the couch of pain. Syme and M’Murdo commended him to the care of a benevolent physician; and when I put the epithet “benevolent” to the word physician, I feel that it is tautology. It is the noblest profession under the sun, and seems to depend for its success as much on the finer qualities of the heart as on the faculties of the head. But what could the benevolence

and skill of the excellent Dr. Maxwell do? There were struggling thoughts tearing that poor frame to pieces. His wife expected her confinement every day; there were four helpless children; there was poverty all round and in front—and what could medicine avail?

Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Purge the stuff'd bosom of the perilous stuff
That weighs upon the heart?

At that moment there was not a cottage in Scotland where there was not a copy of his poems. Country lasses in all the Lowland counties could sing his beautiful ballads; and fine ladies, perhaps, while that great struggle was going on in the cheerless chamber at Dumfries, were bending over harps or pianos, and enchanting old and young with "Auld Rob Morris," or "Lassie o' the Lint-white Locks." If he thought of this at all, it could only be with gratification at the reflection that he had been the diffuser of so much innocent enjoyment. But the contrast was great between the poet, the delight of hamlet and hall, and the poor exhausted excise-man, "drawing his breath in this harsh world with pain," thanking and immortalizing Jessie Lewars with his last song, and writing his last

note of gratitude to Mrs. Dunlop. "Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul, your conversation and your correspondence were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell." That heart was now soon to cease its beating, and on the 21st of July, 1796, having lived a little more than seven-and-thirty years, in darkness and penury, his eye closed for ever. There let him lie, the man of strong passions, of social indulgence, and occasionally of evil life, to be a warning to such as think that genius carries an excuse for breaches of the moral law, and perhaps indemnity against the fearful retribution which ill-regulated desires are certain to entail. His genius and his life were quite distinct. His excesses, such as I have described them, did not depend upon his genius, for we may learn by every day's experience that it is possible to break almost all the commandments without a spark of talent; and the example of Walter Scott, of Tennyson, and of Wordsworth will suffice to show us that genius in its highest development is perfectly consistent with the most blameless conduct. Therefore it is that, while neither denying nor extenuating the faults of Burns as

a man, it is safe—and certainly it is delightful—to turn to his intellectual qualities, and look upon him as the possessor of marvellous gifts, of purest fancies, and, in spite of all that has been said against him, of many virtues. Is love of country a virtue? Is constancy in friendship a virtue? Is indignation at injustice a virtue? Nay, is love to wife and child a virtue? In all these qualities he was as strong as the most immaculate of men. He was, indeed, a bad accountant—probably a bad flax-dresser, a bad farmer, and it is difficult to believe, in spite of the testimonials of his superiors, that he was a good exciseman. But he need not be a bad man for all these drawbacks. A man may be a good father, a true friend, a warm patriot, though ignorant of Cocker's arithmetic, and the routine of crops, and the mysteries of small stills and concealed boards of malt. On these points the decision is of no great consequence; but of this we are quite sure, that, whether farming was ill-managed, or flax ill-carded, or whisky manufactures ill hunted out, he was not a bad poet, and it is with him in that character we have now to do. It seemed, indeed, as if the moment the man died the poet came into stronger life; for instantly the sympathies of the nation were roused, when it was too late. The old epigram came once more into play—

The poet's fate is here in emblem shown;
He asked for bread, and he received a stone.

There was a public funeral of the author of the "Cotter's Saturday Night," though the little room in the Vennel was deserted when it was occupied by the living man. Many years ago, whoever visited Dumfries made it a point to be introduced to the widow of Robert Burns. With what interest they looked in the face of the bonny Jean of other days! The writer of these pages now only remembers that she was a kind, pleasant-looking old lady, whose conversation was chiefly about her husband, and this was all he wished. The voice was very sweet, even in ordinary talk, and as the poet was no practical musician himself, he used to make his wife try over all his words to the tunes they were written for, and judged, according as they adapted themselves to her pure and natural style, whether they required alteration or not. But the proud wife had reason to be as proud a mother. Three of her sons are still alive; two of them of colonel's rank in the India Company's service, and it is often said by those who have had the pleasure of meeting them, that there is no greater treat than to hear the sons of Burns talking about their father, and one of them, who inherits his mother's music, singing his father's songs. Enthusiasm, in fact, became

universal, as soon as assistance was no longer required. People could now applaud with generosity and economy combined, for the very act of clapping their hands so heartily prevented them from putting them into their pockets. As fame grew, respect to the dead increased. He was lifted from his originally humble grave, and placed within a splendid monument; and the zeal of cheap admiration carried some of his countrymen into what to ordinary eyes appears profanation. They stole into the tomb, broke open the coffin, and carried away the head, to have a cast of it to place upon their library tables. They were disciples of a new theory called phrenology, by which the shape and indentations of a skull show the mental power, and they were anxious to see to how many bumps the songs and ballads were due. When the plaster mould was finished, the sacrilege was compounded for by the transmission of the head in an elegant wooden box, and science had obtained the gratification of its curiosity and the contempt and execration of mankind.

Here, then, we have followed this extraordinary man throughout his short career, from the cradle to the grave, and it is time to proceed to a criticism of the works which have made him so illustrious. But criticism on Burns would be something like a criticism on the

sweetness of the rose, or the song of the mavis. His verses were not composed according to any rules, and are not intended to be *judged*; they must be felt. When the great Sir Joshua Reynolds, the painter, heard some young connoisseurs going through the parrot-like routine of great names in the art—

When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff,—

and in the same manner there would be a considerable pocketing of trumpets and tapping of lids, if I began any pedantic disquisition on styles of poetry, qualities of verse, and correctness of metaphor, with reference to Robert Burns. Why, what would people have? We all know he's not the least like Pope; that the "Twa Dogs" has not the slightest resemblance to Spencer's "Fairy Queen;" and that "Duncan Gray" can never be mistaken for "Paradise Lost." In fact, I am happy to say, he is remarkably unclassical, very often incorrect, both in rhyme and grammar, occasionally breaks down in a comparison, and that in choice of subjects he is as low and ungenteel as can possibly be. He actually celebrates the vulgar enjoyments of a set of beggars, met to spend in merriment the result of their fictitious illnesses and melancholy impositions on the charity of

the humane. He writes a poem on a small animal, so dreadfully vulgar that it is never even mentioned in polite society—a nasty, creeping, disgusting reptile, which appeared one day on a lady's bonnet at church. He wrote another poem on a wretched little mouse turned up by a plough, whereas it is evident he ought only to have written about lions and elephants; and altogether, when we examine his performances through the golden spectacles of Almack's and high life, we wonder the man has attained any reputation at all. Alas! that Parnassus is not covered with Turkey carpets, and the fount of Helicon composed of Eau de Cologne! But, perhaps, it is only with "hecklers" and farmers like himself that he is popular—hobnailed fellows who would wear holes in the Turkey carpet, and never perceive the scented Helicon, though held in gobletfuls under their nose? Let us leave them with their congenial poet, and shut him out of our boudoirs and drawing-rooms. But every drawing-room in England would be darkened if Burns was shut out; every library would feel a positive want, if that vulgar person's dirty little volume was excluded. And why is this? All our criticism is contained in the simple answer—The man was natural. The man had a soul. Without this, all the refinement in the world, and all the correctness, and

all the poetry are of no use—we stand unmoved amidst a cannonade of simile and trope ; but *with* this, there is nothing with which we cannot sympathize. There is nothing vulgar or revolting when ennobled by a true and sensitive heart. As to lowness,—that amazing weapon in the armoury of fools,—what is there low in the admiration a peasant breathes out to his sweetheart?—in the description of an honest labourer's cottage, with “the big ha' Bible, aince his father's pride,” placed reverently on the table?—or even in animated pictures of the sports of “Hallow-een” and the jovialities of “Souter Johnnie?” Our esteemed and celebrated friend, Jeames Plush, Esq., may call these things “low,” and express his contempt for them to Mary Hann ; but we, who are not gifted with integuments of purple velvet, come to a very different decision. We tell *our* Mary Hanns that there is something so purifying in warm and real affection, that there is nothing low in the strains where such feelings are expressed ; nay, that there is something elevating to humanity itself in the sincerity and simplicity of those rustic songs—that rank, station, wealth, learning, all sink into the shade when the one great string is struck. “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin!” And this was the power of Robert Burns. If I were quite sure my friend Mr. Plush was fairly

out of hearing, I would quote in proof of this a frightfully vulgar-looking story—but which isn't vulgar in the slightest degree—which, though it is only about tippling shoemakers and whisky-loving farmers, is as free from "lowness" as if it were about sporting dukes and right honourable members of the Cabinet. It is the tale of "Tam o' Shanter," and his encounter with the witches:—

When chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak' the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' gettin fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Where sits our sulky sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.
This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonny lasses.)
O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou wasna sober;
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;

That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on ;
She prophesy'd, that late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon ;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames ; it gars me greet,
To think how many counsels sweet,
How many lengthen'd sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises !

But to our tale :—Ae market night,
Tam had got plauted unco right ;
Fast by an ingle bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely ;
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony ;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither ;
They had been fou' for weeks thegither !
The night drave on wi' sangs an' clatter ;
And ay the ale was growing better :
The Souter tauld his queerest stories ;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus :
The storm without might rair and rustle—
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himself among the nappy :
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure :
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed ;

Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.
Nae man can tether time or tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he takes the road in
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellow'd:
That night, a child might understand,
The de'il had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare, Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares:
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.—

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;

And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Where Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.
Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll;
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae we'll face the devil!—
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he car'd nae deils a boddle.
But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
Till by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light!
And wow! Tam saw an unco sight!
Warlocks and witches in a dance;
Nae cotillion brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels
Put life and mettle in their heels:
A winnock-bunker in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in 'shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.—
Coffins stood round, like open presses;
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;

And by some devilish cantrip slight
Each in its cauld hand held a light—
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span-lang, wee unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted;
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft:
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
'Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linkit at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans
A' plump and strapping, in their teens;
Their sarks instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen;
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them aff my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags, wad spean a foal,
Lowping an' flinging on a cummock,
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kenn'd what was what fu' brawlie,
There was ae winsome lass and walie,
That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after kenn'd on Carrick shore;
For mony a beast to dead she shot
And perish'd mony a bonnic boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear),
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie—
Ah! little kenn'd thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my muse her wing maun cour,
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
(A souple jade she was and strang,
And how Tam stood, like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd;
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:
'Till first ae-caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,
And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"
And in an instant all was dark:
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,
When plundering herds assail their byke;
As open pussie's mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch screech and hollow.

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin'!
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane of the brig;
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they darena cross!
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake!
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she Maggie's mettle—
Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain gray tail:
The carlin clautht her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear—
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

But the *variety* of Burns' powers is so strongly

characteristic, that it would not be right to present only this animated narrative as illustrative of his style. Having succeeded in escaping the contempt and ridicule of Mr. Plush while we dipped into these very unaristocratic descriptions, we will venture on one of his poems of humour. When lovers quarrel, the offended party generally falls into the heroics. There are many allusions to tears, and darts run in a very murderous manner through aching and disconsolate hearts. Now, there seems to have been a tiff of some sort between a young lassie and her wooer, which resulted in a temporary estrangement, and Burns, acting as the poetic chronicler of this event, ought to have treated us to sighs and sobs, with a description of blighted hopes, and care rhyming to despair. This, however, is the way he tells the story, and perhaps it is better than a more melancholy method would have been :—

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me ;
I said there was naething I hated like men,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe, believe me,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe me !

He spak o' the darts in my bonnie black een,
And vow'd for my love he was dying ;
I said he might die when he liked for Jean,
The Lord forgie me for lying, for lying,
The Lord forgie me for lying !

A weel-stocked mailen—himsel' for the laird—
And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers ;
I never loot on that I kenn'd it, or car'd,
But thought I may hae waur offers, waur offers,
But thought I might hae waur offers.

But what wad ye think ? In a fortnight or less—
The deil tak his taste to gae near her !
He up the Gateslack to my black cousin Bess,
Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her, could bear her,
Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her.

But a' the niest week as I fretted wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,
And wha but my fine fickle lover was there !
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock.

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,
Lest neebors might say I was saucy ;
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

I spier'd for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,
Gin she had recovered her hearin',
And how my auld shoon suited her shauchled feet,
But, heavens ! how he fell a swearin', a swearin',
But, heavens ! how he fell a swearin' !

He begged, for Gudesake, I wad be his wife,
Or else I would kill him wi' sorrow ;
So, e'en to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

This little song would have furnished material enough for a fashionable novel in three volumes. In fact, this *is* the story with which most fashionable novels are concerned, only the fickle lover is the young and fascinating Lord Ponjovy, of the noble house of Fitzaddletop,—and the captivating heroine who wins him back is the high-born Lady Cecilia Macreginald, who is married at the end of the story by two archdeacons, assisted by a bishop. So difficult it seems now-a-days to marry an earl's daughter, that it generally takes two or three clergymen to perform the job. What can be better, in the same way, more graphic and life-like, than the wooing, rejection, and final triumph of Duncan Gray? Burns had probably never read the play of the Spanish author, which is called "Disdain cured by Disdain," and shows how the only way to overcome a fine lady's airs of superiority and coldness is to treat them with contempt; but the spirit of the play and the poem is the same.

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe yule night when we were fou,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
 Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
 Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn;
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Time and chance are but a tide,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Slighted love is sair to bide,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
 For a naughty hizzie die?
 She may gae to—France for me!
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

How it comes let doctors tell,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Meg grew sick—as he grew heal,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Something in her bosom wrings,
 For relief a sigh she brings;
 And O, her een, they spak sic things!
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
 Maggie's was a pitcous case,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Duncan could na be her death,
 Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath;
 Now they're crouse and canty baith,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

But, charming as these poems are for their mirth

and humour, they are but feeble specimens of the real powers of the Ayrshire ploughman. It has already been said that variety was what he excelled in ; but if we were called upon to decide on his greatest merit, it would at once be conceded that as a song writer he had no equal. Now a song, to judge from the number of them we meet with, does not seem a very difficult style of composition ; but neither is it difficult to write an epic, or an ode, or a tragedy—as some people have written them. It is remarkably easy to do anything ill. But to excel in song-writing is given to the chosen few. There are more fine plays and admirable poems than really excellent songs written between Shakspeare and Burns. One reason is, that music is such a powerful auxiliary, that it very often destroys the ally it was called in to aid. When the ear is pleased, and the words supply some association on which the mind can pleasantly dwell in connexion with the melody, the hearer is satisfied, although the language is unartistic or weak. Nay, when the impression is once made, no amount of improvement on the original words will banish them from the popular heart. The burden of the song has fixed itself on the memory from childhood, and the music, though entering into a far higher and loftier marriage (even with immortal verse), never ceases to recall the charm it exercised in its early prime ; and people go on

singing the rough old words, unmeaning though they be, in preference to the infinitely superior language to which the music would have been more appropriate. Conscious of this, it was one of the necessities of Burns's position to retain the old chorus—the old story where it was possible—but so to invest them with new sentiment, so to raise them in poetic rank, that the singers were beguiled into the improvement, and the listeners were elevated, or touched, or soothed by apparently the same strains which hitherto had relied for their influence only on their old associations. Thus we find the beautiful ballad of "My ain kind Deary, O," rise like a gold-winged butterfly out of the dull chrysalis of the "Lea Rig;" and from the prosaic commencement of an old rhyme, "This is no my ain house," comes one of the best and sweetest of modern love songs, "This is no my ain lassie."

A song is a short poem, devoting itself to the evolvment of one sentiment, and not wandering off into a variety of ingenious fancies. This constitutes the difficulty of the composition; for, in order to be successful, it must depend on the one undivided feeling with which it starts—with no extraneous ornament—perfectly simple in language—perfectly natural in thought; for a song ought, of all things, to have the appearance of extemporaneous freshness—the bursting

forth of an unrestrainable emotion, proceeding entirely from the heart, and not borrowing foreign graces from the learning or imagination of the singer. How beautiful, how simple, the invitation in the first of songs!—

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over, and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!

A song, moreover, ought to be peculiarly a dramatic composition, conveying the sentiments supposed to fill the singer's mind in language adapted to his situation; the words of a great chieftain encouraging his men to battle, as in Bruce's address at Bannockburn, being different in form and quality from the soft strains of a rural lover impatient for the appearance of his mistress—

When owsen from the furrow'd field
Return so dowf and weary O.

There are men in Denmark who would have made no distinction in simplicity of language and vigour of idea between the heroic king and the enamoured ploughboy. When a minstrel of the ordinary sort composes a song, we think we perceive a gentleman seated at his desk, mending

his pen, writing his lines ; treating the poor little idea he has chosen for his lay as milliners treat their model, loading it with fantastic drapery, sometimes dressing it as a duchess, sometimes as a shepherdess ; but we are well aware, all the time, that it consists of nothing but a leathern shape stuffed with sawdust, and features which imitate humanity in rouged and whitened wax. But in the true bard we feel as if the words rushed forth without premeditation—as if the thoughts rose gradually, warming, brightening, strengthening to the close ; and that if ornaments come, if similes are used, they are but the accessories of the sentiment, and rise as naturally as daisies in grass. But there is no searching after comparisons, no travelling to the ends of the earth for resemblances. This is wit, not passion. And the true poet is so assured in his vocation that he treats the same subject differently, according as it takes the form of common verse or of song. In the one the individual does not come so prominently forward, for it contains only a *description* of his feelings ; in the other, it is the outgush of his feelings themselves, and bears the same relation to the longer poem which the account of an adventure bears to being present at it—the report in the newspaper to the hearing of the speech. Let us take an example of this distinction, in a poem and a song

of Burns, both referring to the same object. In his "Epistle to Davie, a brother poet," he thus expresses his affection for his wedded Jean:—

But tent me, Davie, acc o' hearts!
 (To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
 And flatt'ry I detest,)
 This life has joys for you and I;
 And joys that riches ne'er could buy,
 And joys the very best.
 There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
 The lover an' the frien';
 Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,
 And I, my darling Jean!
 It warms me, it charms me,
 To mention but her name;
 It heats me, it beets me,
 And sets me a' on flame.

Oh, all ye pow'rs who rule above!
 Oh Thou, whose very self art love!
 Thou know'st my words sincere!
 The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
 Or my more dear immortal part,
 Is not more fondly dear!
 When heart-corroding care and grief
 Deprive my soul of rest,
 Her dear idea brings relief
 And solace to my breast!

* * * * *

Oh, how that name inspires my style!
 The words come skelpin, rank and file
 Amaist afore I ken!
 The ready measure rins as fine
 As Phœbus and the famous Nine
 Were glowrin owre my pen!

A beautiful tribute this to the potency of Jean's influence both on heart and brain. But turn we now to a SONG addressed to the same enchantress; see how the thoughts condense themselves to the one great purpose of pouring forth his affection, and how the words glow, as if on fire:—

O, were I on Parnassus' hill!
 Or had of Helicon my fill;
 That I might catch poetic skill,
 To sing how dear I love thee.
 But Nith maun be my Muse's well:
 My Muse maun be thy bonnie sel';
 On Corsincon I'll glow'r and spell,
 And write how dear I love thee.

Then come, sweet Muse, inspire my lay!
 For a' the lee-lang simmer's day
 I coudna sing, I coudna say,
 How much, how dear, I love thee.
 I see thee dancing o'er the green,
 Thy waist sae jimp, thy limbs sae clean,
 Thy tempting lips, thy roguish een—
 By heaven and earth I love thee!

By night, by day, a-field, at hame,
 The thoughts o' thee my breast inflame;
 And aye I muse and sing thy name—
 I only live to love thee.
 Tho' I were doom'd to wander on
 Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,
 Till my last weary sand was run;
 Till then—and then I love thee.

This and many other impassioned songs were addressed to Mrs. Burns; "O' a' the airts," we have seen, on her being forced away from him; the last-quoted on her happy return. But people are always apt to believe that a song breathing such apparently personal feelings, enriched with local colouring, and even containing a Christian or surname by which to identify the heroine, is addressed to some particular person, and alludes to some particular incident. But this, with so truly imaginative a writer as Burns, was not the case; and a great portion of the bad fame under which he labours is no doubt attributable to the common mistake on this subject. He himself, with a wayward pride in his evil reputation, rather encouraged this delusion by insinuating that many of his warmest effusions were the transcript of actual feelings and events. But a cautious criticism makes us doubt whether his Montgomery's Peggies, Clarindas, Bonnie Bells and his list as long as Don Juan's, had a real existence at all, or furnished any sufficient ground for the excessive tenderness of the sentiments expressed. Damsels of high degree and country lasses have been pointed out by different editors as the great originals immortalized in those performances; but it will be safer to consider them at most as the starting points of his muse, and that the slightest possible amount of acquaint-

ance in fact, took form and substance as happy, hopeful, or despairing love, as suited the exigencies of the verse. Burns saw that a song to be worth anything at all, must be tender beyond the bounds of ordinary friendship. He, therefore, in the case of those carefully described and minutely identified ladies, uses many phrases expressive of the deepest affection and closest intimacy, when in reality nothing of the kind existed. It was the poet using his marvellous gift of transmuting everything he touched into something richer and more valuable than before. Let us inquire into his relations with Clarinda. A very slight acquaintance with this person, and a correspondence carried on with unusual stiffness and formality, are all that can be proved with regard to the terms they were on. But leaving the field of letters, and coming into the more congenial territory of song, what do we find? We find the most tender and touching lament that ever was composed.

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, and then for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.
Who shall say that fortune grieves him
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy;
But to see her, was to love her;
Love but her, and love for ever.—
Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka joy and treasurc,
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae farewell, alas! for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!

These sentiments, exquisitely true in themselves, and all these agonies of regret and pangs of recollection, were addressed to a young lady, who, as if to prove the fantastic nature of the connexion, bore a fictitious name, and was about as real an object of adoration to the bard as Dulcinea del Toboso was to Don Quixote. We may safely conclude that she was a quiet, well-behaved, respectable young woman, when answering to her own baptismal appellation and performing the duties of her station, and who would have been immensely scandalized if the words of these admirable stanzas had been addressed to her in her true character. Whatever

amount of tears and sighs, therefore, the poet may have lavished on the ethereal Clarinda, we may be pretty sure he never passed the bounds of the strictest decorum in his intercourse with the substantial Mrs. Meiklehose; for this is the dreadful prose into which matrimony translated the heroine of so much poetry. The license taken by the muse seems to have been perfectly understood at the time. Song had, in fact, a language of its own, and scarcely required to be reduced into ordinary speech before its actual meaning was found out. Allowance was made for its exaggerations, as men travelling in the East have to make deductions from the grandeur of Oriental metaphor, where a wish that you may live a thousand years merely means, "I hope you're pretty well," and "May the prophet stretch his shield upon your journey!" is equivalent to "Good-bye, Brown."

Here is another proof of the amplifying effects of the poetic tongue:—Mrs. Riddel, of Glen Riddel, his friend and patroness, rich in "world's gear," but richer still in the universal respect with which she was surrounded, had appeared more formal than usual in her reply to a letter of the poet. Does he write a note of inquiry as to the cause of her coldness? Does he tell her how such a change from her uniform kindness distresses him? Of course he does;

for her correspondence was one of the chief charms of his life, and he was grateful for the sympathy and condescension of so distinguished a friend. And what is the form it takes? This is his letter of expostulation :—

Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
 Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
 Well thou know'st my aching heart—
 And canst thou leave me thus for pity?
 Is this thy plighted, fond regard,
 Thus cruelly to part, my Katy?
 Is this thy faithful swain's reward—
 An aching, broken heart, my Katy!

• Farewell! and ne'er such sorrows tear
 That fickle heart of thine, my Katy!
 Thou mayst find those will love thee dear—
 But not a love like mine, my Katy!
 Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
 Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
 Well thou know'st my aching heart—
 And canst thou leave me thus for pity?

Would not any one believe that this was the outpouring of a lover's despair at losing his sweetheart, and not merely a lamentation over the indifference he thought he had perceived in a lady's correspondence? To him, to Mrs. Riddel, and to all who were in the secret of the true meaning of poetic language, the sense was plain enough. It is a simple question, to which he requested an answer, and meant, in

ordinary phraseology, that he begged she would resume her accustomed tone of familiarity and friendship. This is a very strong argument in favour of the merely imaginary nature of so many passionate descriptions of beauty and allusions to rapturous meetings and melancholy separations. How else are we to account for his verses in honour of "Jessie Lewars," the last and most beautiful of his songs? Just look at the circumstances of that composition. Jessie Lewars was the kindest nurse, the most devoted attendant on his sick bed—very young, very innocent, and the daughter of one of his favourite companions in the Excise. He was grateful to her for her kindness to his wife and children, and, in one of the intervals of ease, called for pen and ink, and wrote a song in her honour. What do we see in this song? The grief of a hopeless lover—the impassioned admiration, the warm address, which that description of poem requires, but having no reference to the state of his own feelings towards Jessie Lewars. His attachment to her was that of an affectionate and grateful friend—he looked on her almost as a daughter; but once put the pen into his hand, once let him think of her as the heroine of a song, away go such sober sentiments; they become elevated into a far warmer

sphere—kindliness becomes love, and gratitude
passion :—

Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy !

Altho' thou maun never be mine,
Altho' even hope is denied ;
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy !

I mourn through the gay, gaudy day,
As, hopeless, I muse on thy charms :
But welcome the dream o' sweet slumber,
For then I am lockt in thy arms—Jessy !

I guess by the dear angel smile,
I guess by the love-rolling e'e ;
But why urge the tender confession
'Gainst fortune's fell cruel decree ?—Jessy !
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy !

As another instance of the metamorphosis which all his feelings underwent the moment he threw them into the form of song, let us see what he makes of the admiration excited in him by ladies of a rank so far above his own that no thought of winning their affection could

enter his mind. Song was, in fact, to him merely the language of love; and whatever he put into his magic cauldron, whether esteem, or respect, or reverence, the result was always the same. Pour what you chose into the conjuror's bottle, nothing came out but love.

The beautiful Lucy Johnstone, says Allan Cunningham, married to Oswald, of Auchencruive, was the heroine of "Wat ye wha's in yon town," a lady of lofty station, an heiress, and a toast—and thus she is sung by the married gauger:—

O, wat ye wha's in yon town,
Ye see the e'enin sun upon?
The fairest dame's in yon town,
That e'enin sun is shining on.

Now haply down yon gay green shaw,
She wanders by yon spreading tree;
How blest ye flow'rs that round her blaw,
Ye catch the glances o' her e'e!

How blest ye birds that round her sing,
And welcome in the blooming year!
And doubly welcome be the spring,
The season to my Lucy dear.

The sun blinks blithe on yon town,
And on yon bonnie braes of Ayr;
But my delight in yon town,
And dearest bliss, is Lucy fair.

Without my love, not a' the charms
O' Paradise could yield me joy;
But gie me Lucy in my arms,
And welcome Lapland's dreary sky!

My cave wad be a lover's bower,
Tho' raging winter rent the air;
And she a lovely little flower,
That I wad tent and shelter there.

O sweet is she in yon town,
Yon sinkin sun's gane down upon;
A fairer than's in yon town
His setting beam ne'er shone upon.

If angry fate is sworn my foe,
And suffering I am doom'd to bear;
I careless quit aught else below,
But spare me—spare me, Lucy dear!

For while life's dearest blood is warm,
Ae thought frae her shall ne'er depart,
And she—as fairest is her form!
She has the truest, kindest heart!
O, wat ye wha's in yon town,
Ye see the e'enin sun upon?
The fairest dame's in yon town
That e'enin sun is shining on.

On a visit for a single day to the minister of Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, he is very much pleased with the beauty and manners of his host's young daughter, the blue-eyed Jean Jeffrey. What was the form this feeling took

in song? He threatens, if she refuses his love, to die for her sake!—

I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen,
A gate, I fear I'll dearly rue;
I gat my death frae twa sweet een,
Twa lovely een o' bonnie blue,
'Twas not her golden ringlets bright;
Her lips, like roses, wat wi' dew,
Her heaving bosom, lily-white—
It was her een sae bonnie blue.

She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wyl'd;
She charm'd my soul—I wist na how;
And ay the stound, the deadly wound,
Cam frae her een sae bonnie blue.
But spare to speak, and spare to speed;
She'll aiblins listen to my vow:
Should she refuse, I'll lay my dead
To her twa een sae bonnie blue.

Many other instances might be given, but these will suffice to relieve the memory of the poet from the imputation of being a professed Lothario. Burns, in fact, seems to have been a hypocrite the wrong way, and to have affected more vices than he possessed. It is not indeed surprising that the number of those amorous effusions should have given rise to the reports of his dissolute life. He wrote so constantly in the character of a passionate admirer of the fair sex, that at last people thought "himself must be the hero of his story." You may have heard

of an actor, who was placed so constantly before the audience in the character of a swindler, and sometimes even as first or second murderer in a melodrama, that he applied to the manager for a change of parts; for the baker had begun to refuse him credit, and his landlady expected to be strangled in her sleep. Burns's reputation suffers from the same cause. If he had written worse amatory poems, he would have been thought a better man. With this explanation we can look on his most rapturous effusions as exercises of his genius, and not manifestations of his inconstancy. "Wilt thou be my Dearie?" seems rather a free-and-easy question if addressed to any mortal mixture of earth's mould, but soars away into the region where passion loses all its grossness when directed to an abstraction, or even, as the biographers maintain, to the mother of a belted earl:—

Wilt thou be my dearie?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart-
Wilt thou let me cheer thee?
By the treasure of my soul,
That's the love I bear thee!
I swear and vow that only thou
Shall ever be my dearie.
Only thou, I swear and vow,
Shall ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou lo'es me;
Or if thou wilt no be my ain,

Say na thou'lt refuse me :
 If it winna, canna be,
 Thou, for thine may choose me,
 Let me, lassie, quickly die,
 Trusting that thou lo'es me.
 Lassie, let me quickly die,
 Trusting that thou lo'es me.

It requires also some acquaintance with the actual meaning of Burns' words to enter fully into the sense of his song to Chloris.

Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
 Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
 Bewitchingly o'er-arching
 Twa laughin' een o' bonnie blue.
 Her smiling sae wyling,
 Wad make a wretch forget his woe ;
 What pleasure, what treasure,
 Unto these rosy lips to grow :
 Such was my Chloris' bonnie face,
 When first her bonnie face I saw ;
 And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,
 She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Like harmony her motion ;
 Her pretty ankle is a spy
 Betraying fair proportion,
 Wad mak a saint forget the sky.
 Sae warming, sae charming,
 Her faultless form and gracefu' air ;
 Ilk feature—auld Nature
 Declar'd that she could do nae mair :
 Hers are the willing chains o' love,
 By conquering beauty's sovereign law ;
 And aye my Chloris' dearest charin,
 She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Let others love the city,
And gaudy show at sunny noon;
Gie me the lonely valley,
The dewy eve, and rising moon
Fair beaming, and streaming,
Her silver light the boughs amang;
While falling, recalling,
The amorous thrush concludes his sang:
There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove
By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
And hear my vows o' truth and love,
And say thou lo'es me best of a'.

But however groundless the origin of these effusions may be, such a repertory of truly expressive and passionate love-songs does not exist in any language. The soft, the tender, the happy, the mournful, the hopeful, and the despairing, all find their perfect representation; and—as in all poems of surpassing value—they contain riches undreamt of even by their author. Each reader finds the feeling or sentiment which possesses him brought clearly out in language which he could not have used, but which, being written down, seems exactly suited to his position. As the speeches in Shakspeare not merely carry on the play and represent the feelings of the personages of the story, but by some marvellous process adapt themselves to the sentiments of thousands of people who were never in the situation contemplated by the poet, so in

the songs of Burns there is an inexhaustible treasury of exactly fitting expressions for every variety of thought and condition. In this respect how different from the songs of other men! The quaintnesses of the song writers of Charles's time, and the unmistakeable marks they carry of their date and origin, make them unfit vehicles for the conveyance of any sentiments but those of that particular period and state of manners. Later attempts have the same fault; but in Burns alone, and in Shakspeare, do we find the individual lost in the species; for those great authors give us an insight more into the great passions of humanity than into the peculiarities of particular men. Othello is the passion of jealousy; Macbeth of guilty ambition; and Burns' songs are simply the passion of love.

But there is a difference between a song, in the strict definition to which it is here confined, and a ballad; though both equally are sung. A ballad is a narrative in verse, set to music, and contains avowedly the sentiments of the personages introduced, and not the singer's own. And how beautiful his ballads are! In

the warmth of his expressions gives only rich colouring to the feeling, and does not
 forth into a raging fire, impossible to be
 . He does not dramatise the situation,

constituting himself the lover, but draws his charm rather from description than from his own sensations. In this he resembles the great poet of the present time, to whom at first view you would think he had less affinity than to any other. For Tennyson is the most correct, the most richly-toned, and the most majestic of poets, with more decoration of language expended on his verses than has ever before been lavished on such massiveness of thought. It is the profuse ornamentation of Benvenuto on cups of solid gold. See how he describes a landscape; not by compiling a catalogue of its component parts—so many oaks, so many roses, such an extent of water, and such an amount of light and shade, but always in subordination to the human interest, always the framework and setting, but never the main object of his picture. Then mark the minuteness of his observation, and the accuracy of his knowledge of fruit and plant and flower; and how perfectly the scene is always in keeping with the sentiment. It is this that brings landscape into the Poet's domain. He ennobles it into something higher than mere landscape, not by altering its features, or enriching it with exotic trees, or birds of supernatural plumage, but by attaching a feeling to every portion of the description. For instance:—a youth is going to pay his first visit

to a girl, whom he has so often heard described as good and beautiful, that he knows beforehand he is certain to fall in love with her. What is the landscape he travels through as he walks with his friend towards her home?

— All the land in flowery squares
Beneath a broad and equal blowing wind,
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large cloud
Drew downward ; but all else of Heaven was pure
Up to the Sun, and May from verge to verge,
And May with me from head to heel. And now
As though 'twere yesterday : as though it were
The hour just flown, that morn with all its sound
(For those old Mays had thrice the life of these)
Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to graze,
And where the hedge-row cuts the pathway, stood
Leaning his horns into the neighbour's field,
And lowing to his fellows. From the woods
Came voices of the well-contented doves.
The lark could scarce get out his notes for joy,
But shook his song together as he neared
His happy home, the ground. To left and right
The cuckoo told his name to all the hills ;
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm ;
The red-cap whistled ; and the nightingale
Sang loud, as though he were the bird of day.

This is a beautiful preparation for the most charming of Tennyson's shorter poems—"The Gardener's Daughter." So the key-note to many of Burns' ballads is struck at once by a vivid portraiture of the scenery where his cha-

racters are placed. In one of the finest of them—destroyed, however, as has been already mentioned, by his anxiety to retain the foolish old burden of a well-known air—he does little more than describe the external objects by which he is surrounded, but extracts from each of them a sentiment in accordance with the state of his feelings. Omit the chorus, and the remainder rises into the dignity of a serious poem.

Again rejoicing nature sees
 Her robe assume its vernal hues,
 Her leafy locks wave in the breeze,
 All freshly steep'd in morning dews.
 And maun I still on Menie doat,
 And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
 For it's jet, jet black, an' it's like a hawk,
 An' it winna let a body be.

In vain to me the cowslips blaw,
 In vain to me the vi'lets spring;
 In vain to me, in glen or shaw,
 The mavis and the lintwhite sing.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
 Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks;
 But life to me's a weary dream,
 A dream of aye that never wauks.

The wanton coot the water skims,
 Among the reeds the ducklings cry,
 The stately swan majestic swims,
 And every thing is blest but I.

The sheep-herd steeks his faulding slap,
And owre the moorland whistles shrill;
Wi' wild, unequal, wand'ring step,
I meet him on the dewy hill.

And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,
Blythe waukens by the daisy's side,
And mounts and sings on flittering wings,
A woe-worn ghaist I hameward glide.

Come, Winter, with thine angry howl,
And raging bend the naked tree:
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,
When nature all is sad like me!
And maun I still on Menie doat,
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
For it's jet, jet black, an' it's like a hawk,
An' it winna let a body be.

In the same way, what a landscape of wintry desolation is presented to us in the opening stanzas of "My Nannie, O!" But in this instance, the spirit in which it is viewed impresses it with a character of content and happiness very different from the melancholy of the last picture, which consisted only of the happy aspects of nature—the blackbird's song and the bloom of the cowslip. In both the beauty of the picture consists in contrast. To the farm-labourer the setting of the wintry sun, however dreary the darkness it produces, is the signal not only of release from toil, but of the begin-

ning of his journey over heath and hill to visit his sweetheart.

There were certain nights on which, with the consent of the elders, the young people of the neighbourhood, even though previously unknown to each other, were allowed to meet. In the pastoral districts of Clydesdale and Nithsdale that custom continues still. Perhaps it arises in those thinly-peopled regions from the absence of any town or village where acquaintance could naturally be formed. There are lonely farm-houses, many miles away from the nearest habitation, with the cart-roads impassable in the bad weather, and the daily labour at other seasons requiring the undivided attention of all the household. In situations such as these the young lad or lass would grow up in a state of savage isolation, unless it were for the custom now alluded to, by which an adventurous swain might traverse the mountain, and by tapping on the window procure an interview with any curious maiden who might be inclined to respond to the summons. She would put on her snood, and go out into the night to see who the visitor was. He would probably begin, after the manner of young Norval, by telling her his name, and where he fed his flock. If the impression was mutually agreeable, the visit would be repeated, till in the course of time he would be invited in,

and introduced to the family circle. By this simple and well-understood arrangement, the solitude of the shieling among the hills, or farmhouse in the valley, was compensated for. There was no master of the ceremonies, to be sure, to make the formal introduction; the tap on the window-pane supplied the place of that very polite official, and an acquaintance sprang up between the boy and girl, not the less pleasant perhaps, that it was entirely of their own making. The hero of the little ballad now to be quoted seems to have got over the first difficulty. His Nannie has given him several meetings, and at the trysted hour expects the well-known signal. No wonder he is in a rapture of delight at the last blink of the expiring sun. The twelve or fourteen miles of rugged way will soon be got over, and he will forget the storm and journey at the first "whisper in the porch."

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
And I'll awa to Nannie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill;
The night's baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I'll get my plaid, an' out I'll steal,
An' owre the hills to Nannie, O.

My Nannie's charming, sweet, an' young;
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nannie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonnie, O:
The op'ning gowan, wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be?
I'm welcome aye to Nannie, O.

My riches a's my penny-fee,
An' I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a' my Nannie, O.

Our auld guidman delights to view
His sheep an' kye thrive bonnie, O;
But I'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh,
An' has nae care but Nannie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I'll tak what Heav'n will sen' me, O:
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nannie, O.

But sometimes the meeting was more restrained, and consisted only of a conversation, like that between Romeo and Juliet, from the elevation of a balcony. Whether the Capulets and Montagues winked at this arrangement, or

whether it occurred without their knowledge, the effect was the same. An acquaintance was commenced, which in due time ended in matrimony; and if unfortunately broken off by the fickleness of the lady, it furnished, at least, excellent ground for the lover's lamentation. One of Burns' earliest songs was addressed to a maid who seems to have promised an interview at the window; and we are to gather from the tenderness and pathos of the words, that she sometimes did not keep true to her engagement.

O Mary, at thy window be,
 It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
 Those smiles and glances let me see
 That make the miser's treasure poor:
 How blithely wad I bide the stoure,
 A weary slave frae sun to sun;
 Could I the rich reward secure,
 The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
 The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
 To thee my fancy took its wing,
 I sat, but neither heard or saw:
 Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
 And yon the toast of a' the town,
 I sigh'd, and said among them a',
 "Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
 Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
 Or canst thou break that heart of his,
 Whase only faut is loving thee?

If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

There are many other ballads, both grave and gay, which it would be a pleasure to quote, and many also of his longer and more ambitious efforts, which have taken their place in our language as poems properly so called. The best known of these is the "Cotter's Saturday Night." With the exception of very few stanzas, and an occasional expression, this poem is in English. It has therefore stood the test of comparison with the works of acknowledged English poets, and has not suffered side by side with either Crabbe or Wordsworth.

"The short and simple annals of the poor" were never so tenderly delivered; and if in such escapades as "Holy Willie's Prayer," and the "Kirk in Danger," Burns had lashed the vices of hypocrisy and pretension, far deeper was his feeling—as shown in this patriarchal picture—of the beauty of true religion and sincere domestic piety. It ought to be accepted as an apology and atonement for the over-vehemence of his attacks on the false and cruel. And it was so accepted in many a pious household in his native land. Many a strict disciplinarian is softened as he thinks of this poem; and when the wilder

portion of the poet's works is mentioned, says—
 “Ah! but he could na have been altogether bad;
 he must have had fine feelings in him, and a
 reverent regard for goodness, the man that wrote
 the ‘Cotter’s Saturday Night.’”

He must have had more. He must have
 had a Wilkie-like power of producing a family
 scene, and endowing it with life and sentiment.
 It is a group forming a delightful companion to
 the fireside picture by Goldsmith of the Vicar
 of Wakefield.

My lov’d, my honour’d, much respected friend!
 No mercenary bard his homage pays;
 With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end:
 My dearest meed, a friend’s esteem and praise:
 To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
 The lowly train in life’s sequester’d scene;
 The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
 What Aikin in a cottage would have been;
 Ah! tho’ his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween!

November chill blows loud wi’ angry sigh;
 The short’ning winter-day is near a close;
 The miry beasts retreating frae the plough:
 The black’ning trains o’ craws to their repose:
 The toil-worn Cotter frae his labour goes,
 This night his weekly moil is at an end,
 Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
 Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
 And weary, o’er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
 Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;

Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher thro'
To meet their Dad, wi' flichterin noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily,
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie Wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour and his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns cam drapping in,
At service out, amang the farmers roun':
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's welfare kindly spiers:
The social hours, swift-wing'd unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the unco's that he sees or hears;
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother, wi' her needle an' her sheers,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;—
The Father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
The youngers a' are warn'd to obey;
And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
An' ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway!
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain, that sought the Lord aright!"

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
 Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
 Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,
 To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
 The wily Mother sees the conscious flame
 Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek,
 With heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,
 While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
 Weel pleas'd the Mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
 A strappan youth; he tak's the Mother's eye;
 Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
 The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
 The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
 But blate, an laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
 The Mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
 What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;
 Weel pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
 O heart-felt raptures!—bliss beyond compare!
 I've paced much this weary, mortal round,
 And sage experience bids me this declare—
 “If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
 One cordial in this melancholy vale,
 'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
 In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,
 Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale.”

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
 A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
 That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
 Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?

Curse on his perjur'd arts ! dissembling smooth !
 Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd ?
 Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
 Points to the parents fondling o'er their child ?
 Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild ?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
 The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food :
 The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
 That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood :
 The dame brings forth in complimental mood,
 To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck fell,
 An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid ;
 The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
 How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide ;
 The Sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
 The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride ;
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
 His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare ;
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care ;
 And " Let us worship GOD ! " he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise ;
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim :
 Perhaps Dundee's wild-warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name ;
 Or noble Elgin beats the heaven-ward flame,
 The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays :
 Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame ;
 The tickl'd ear no heart-felt raptures raise ;
 Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like Father reads the sacred page,
 How Abram was the friend of God on high;
 Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
 Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
 Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
 Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
 How HE, who bore in Heaven the second name,
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head,
 How His first followers and servants sped,
 The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
 How he, who lone in Patmos banished,
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
 And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's
 command.

Then kneeling down, to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,
 The Saint, the Father, and the Husband prays:
 Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
 That thus they all shall meet in future days:
 There ever bask in uncreated rays,
 No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
 Together hymning their Creator's praise,
 In such society, yet still more dear:
 While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
 In all the pomp of method and of art,
 When men display to congregations wide,
 Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!

The pow'r, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But, haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
Their Parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That HE, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man's the noblest work of GOD;"
And certes, in fair virtue's heav'nly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of Hell, in wickedness refin'd!

O Scotia; my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil,
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, O! may heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd Isle.

O Thou ! who pour'd the patriotic tide
That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted heart :
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward !)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert ;
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard !

Read over these quotations and judge for yourselves. In the gay, the sad, the empassioned, the tender, and the domestic, you can see his extraordinary power. There are other styles in which he also excelled. But with this we conclude. Burns, then, has lived his seven-and-thirty years, and is in his honoured grave. No great space of time is seven-and-thirty years in which to have built such a pyramid to his own fame as advancing time shall never destroy. Measure it by the ordinary duration of life, it is short ; measure it by what he might have achieved, if he had run the usual course allotted to men, and he seems cut off before he had well entered upon the course. The greatest works of almost all great men have been produced after the age of thirty-seven. If Shakspeare, Milton, Bacon, Newton, had died at that age, the world would have lost the masterpieces of their minds. Some poets who rose to fame had not even found out their powers at that time of life. Scott had not written a novel ; Cowper had not

written a poem till past forty. If Burns had been spared, what might we not have hoped? What dramas from the author of the "Jolly Beggars!" What Tyrtean strains, during the peninsular war, from the author of the "Do, or Die," of Bannockburn! But these are but idle suppositions. Let us be thankful for what we have. The feast is plentiful and varied as it is. He might have been unable to adapt himself to the wonderfully rapid changes of public taste which occurred under the pervading influence of the struggle for life and death in which all our faculties were called forth. He died, perhaps, at the right time. Death consecrated him as a classic, before he had time to wear out the subjects in which he excelled, and which it is now an anachronism in taste for any one to attempt. Think kindly of the man while you judge admiringly of the author. He was aware of his failings more keenly than the bitterest of his foes. Nobody could write such an epitaph as he composed for himself. Let bigotry look on it and relent; let the careless, the idle, the dissolute, think seriously of the sad lesson it conveys:—

Is there a whim-inspired fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

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